



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

**National WHB Advisory Board Briefing
October 13, 2011**

Wild Horse and Burro Program Summary of Presentation

- Wild Horse and Burro Act (1971) Mandate
- Overview of Existing Program Management
- History, Program Status & Facts & Figures
- New WHB Strategy Development Process
- Strategy Details: 7 Elements of Reform

Wild Horse and Burro Act (1971-as amended in 1976,1978 & 2004)

- Mandate & Constraints
- Amendments



Wild Horse & Burro Act (1971)

- WHB to be considered in areas where they are presently found as an integral part of the natural system of public lands
- Maintain a thriving natural ecological balance in combination with other multiple uses
- Management at the minimum feasible management level
- Conduct Research

Wild Horse & Burro Act (1971)

- Consult with State wildlife management agencies
- May designate specific Ranges for protection and preservation
- Authority to enter into cooperative agreements with land owners
- Can not relocate animals to areas where they did not previously exist in 1971

Wild Horse & Burro Act (1971)

- Authorized to use helicopters for capture and motor vehicles for transport (1976)
- Immediately remove excess animals and determine if AMLs are to be achieved by removal or destruction of excess animals or other means such as sterilization or natural controls (1978)
- Maintain a current inventory (1978)

Wild Horse & Burro Act (1971)

- Excess animals made available for adoption (1978)
- Destroy those for which no adoption demand exists (1978)
- Sale w/o limitation (2004):
 - Offered unsuccessfully for adoption 3 times
 - 11 years and older

Overview of Existing Program Management

Six Components

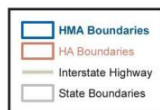
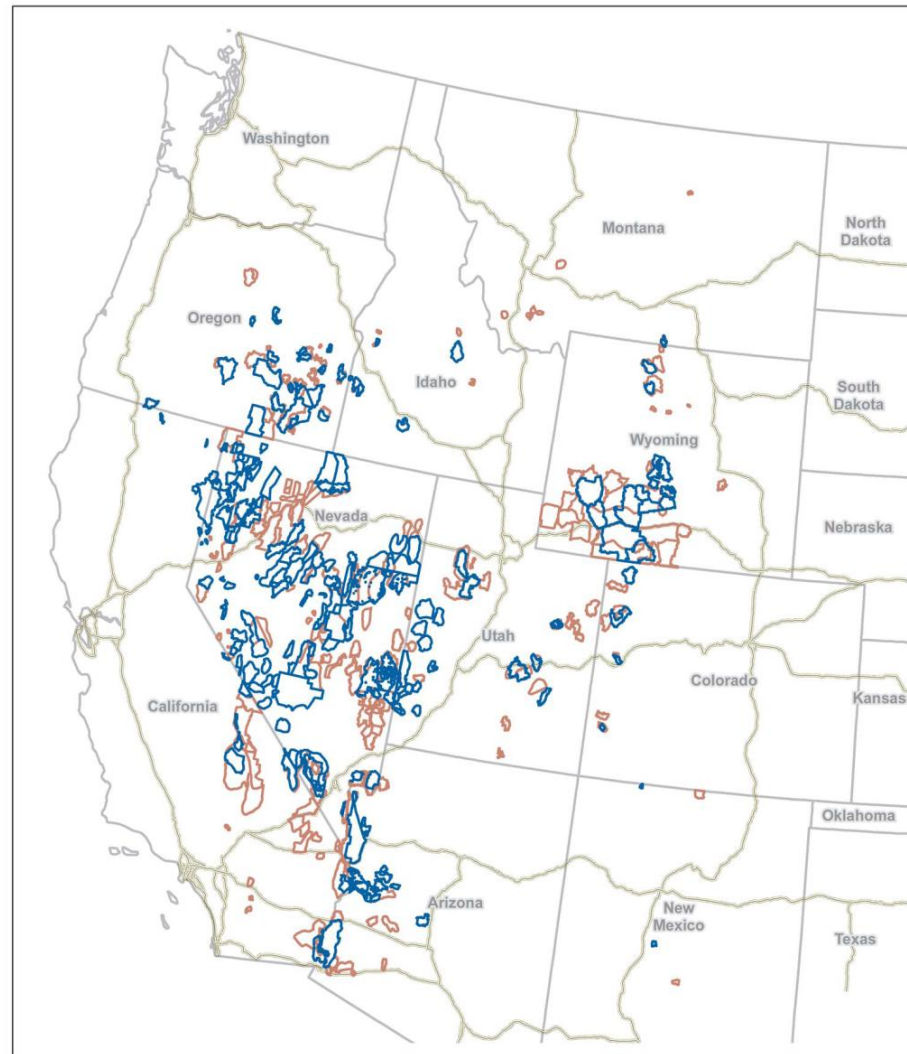
1. Management on the Range
2. Population Control: Gathers, Population Growth Suppression Methods
3. Preparation for Adoption (Short-term holding)
4. Adoption Program
5. Adoption Oversight – Compliance Checks
6. Long Term Holding

Where Are They Found

- 10 western states
- 179 Herd Management Areas
 - 26.9 million acres public land
 - 31.6 million acres all ownerships
- 26,600 Appropriate Management Level
- 38,500 estimated pop. (Feb. 2011)
 - 33,000 horses
 - 5,500 burros
- 19,000 to 21,000 estimated in Nevada (Feb. 2011)



Herd Areas and Herd Management Areas



Components of Program Management

1. Management on the Range

- Goal: Healthy herds on health rangelands in combination with other uses of public lands
- Vegetation monitoring
- Population Survey (Census)
- Herd health monitoring



Components of Program Management

2. Population Control: Removals & population growth suppression

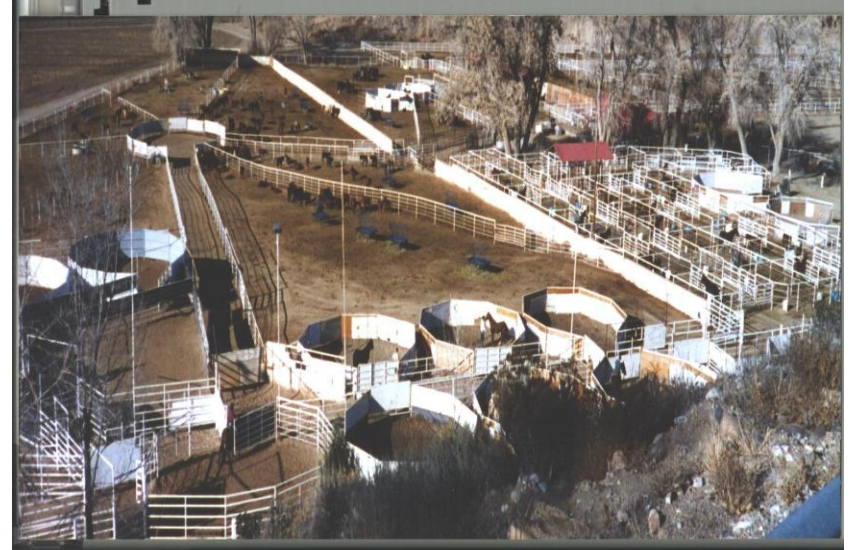
- Population Control
 - Removal:
helicopters/bait water trap
 - Catch Treat & Release Gathers
 - Fertility Control
 - Sex ratio adjustment to favor males
 - Introduction of non-reproductive herd components (geldings)



Components of Program Management

3. Preparation for Adoption – Short Term Holding

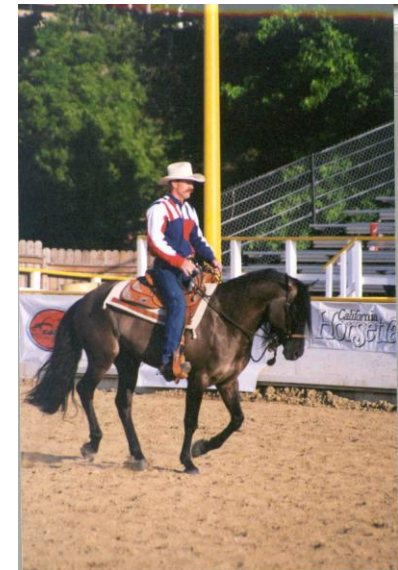
- 25 STH: BLM owned, contract & prison (6)
- 11,233 (Sept, 2011)
- Freezemarking
- Vaccinations
- Aging
- Deworming
- Facility Adoptions
- Horse training at most prison facilities



Components of Program Management

4. Adoption Programs

- STH Facility Adoptions
 - Untrained animals
- Prison Adoptions - Trained Animals
- Satellite Adoptions across the country
- Internet Adoptions
- Foster Home Adoptions
- Mustang Heritage Programs
 - Makeovers
 - Trainer Incentive Program
 - Youth



Components of Program Management

5. Adoption Oversight - Compliance

- Compliance checks of adopted animals to ensure humane care
 - Random
 - Investigation of complaints
 - 3,387 completed in FY2010



Components of Program Management

6. Long-term holding

- 20 Contract Facilities
- 8,000 to 15,000 acres
in size per facility
- OK, KA, OH & SD
- 30,012 animals (Sept,
2011)



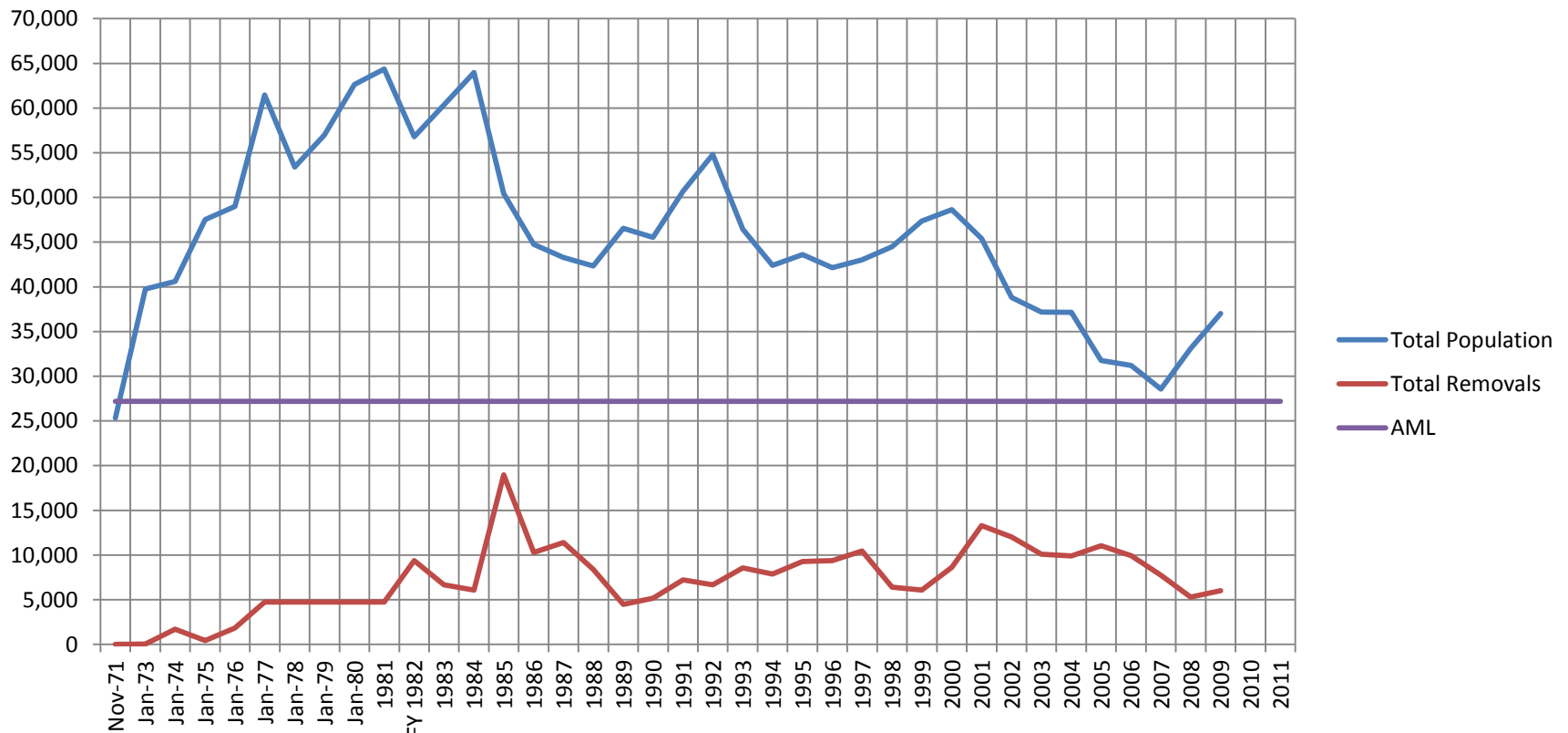
History, Program Status, Facts and Figures

Current Program Status

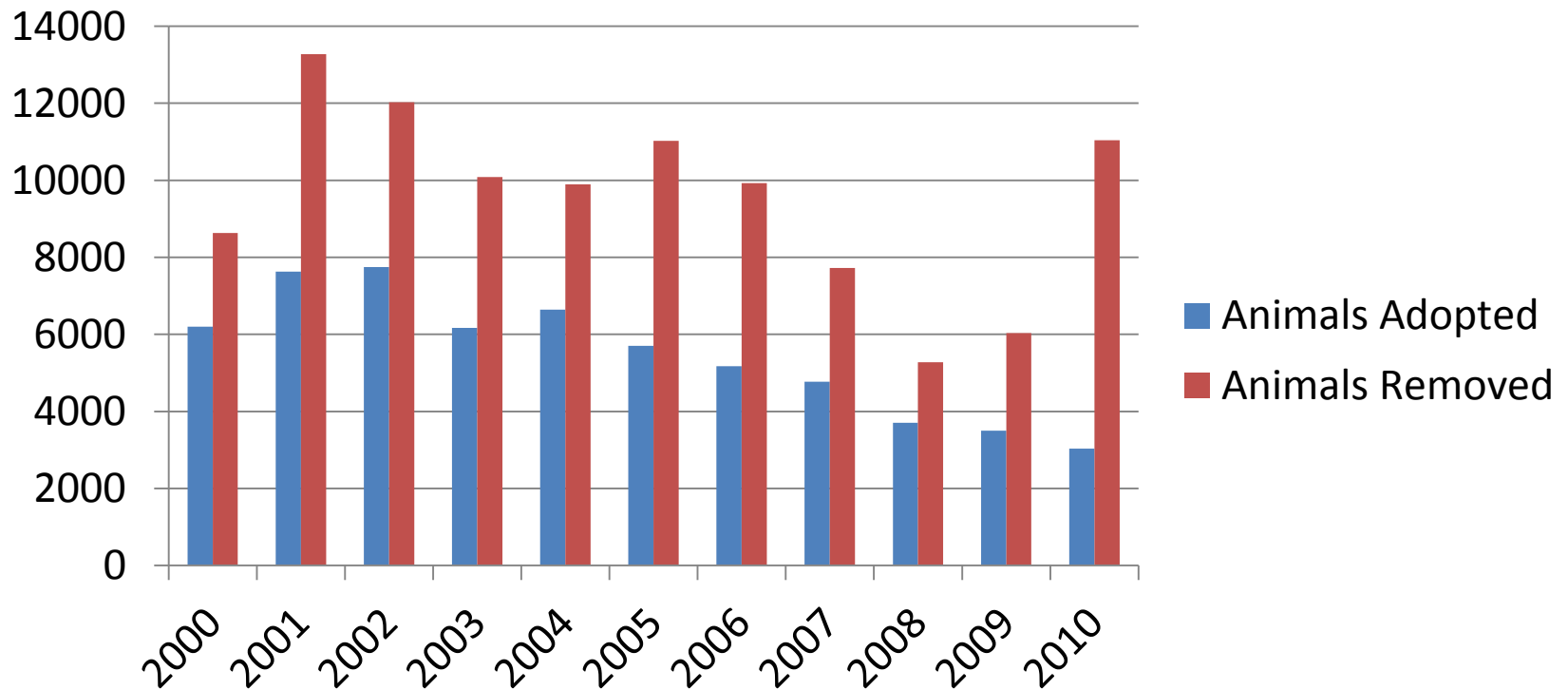
- Estimated WHB population on the range = 38,500
- Target Management Number (AML) = 26,600
- Captive animals in Short Term Holding = 11,233
- Captive animals in Long Term Holding = 30,012
- Total in Captivity = 41,245
- Removals: 10,000/yr. (2010-2011)
- Fertility control - average of 500/yr. (2004 – 2010)
- Adoptions: dropped from 7,700 (2003) to about 3,100 (2010)
- Sales: about 650/yr. (2005 -2010)

History of Removals & Wild Horse Population Numbers on the Range

- 40 years of experience and evidence indicates that wild horse populations increase at 20% / year or double in numbers every 4 years.

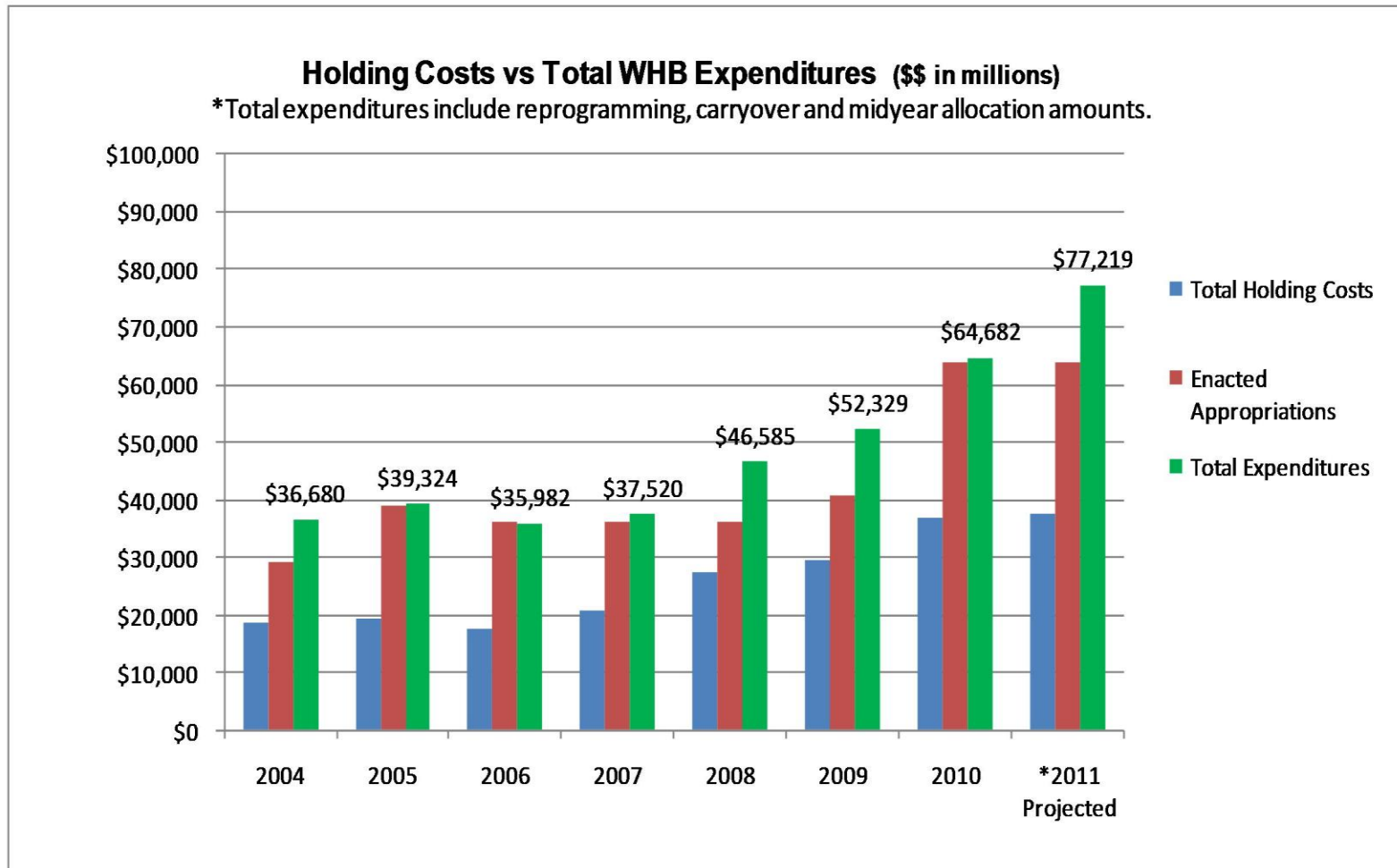


WILD HORSE AND BURRO REMOVALS & ADOPTIONS

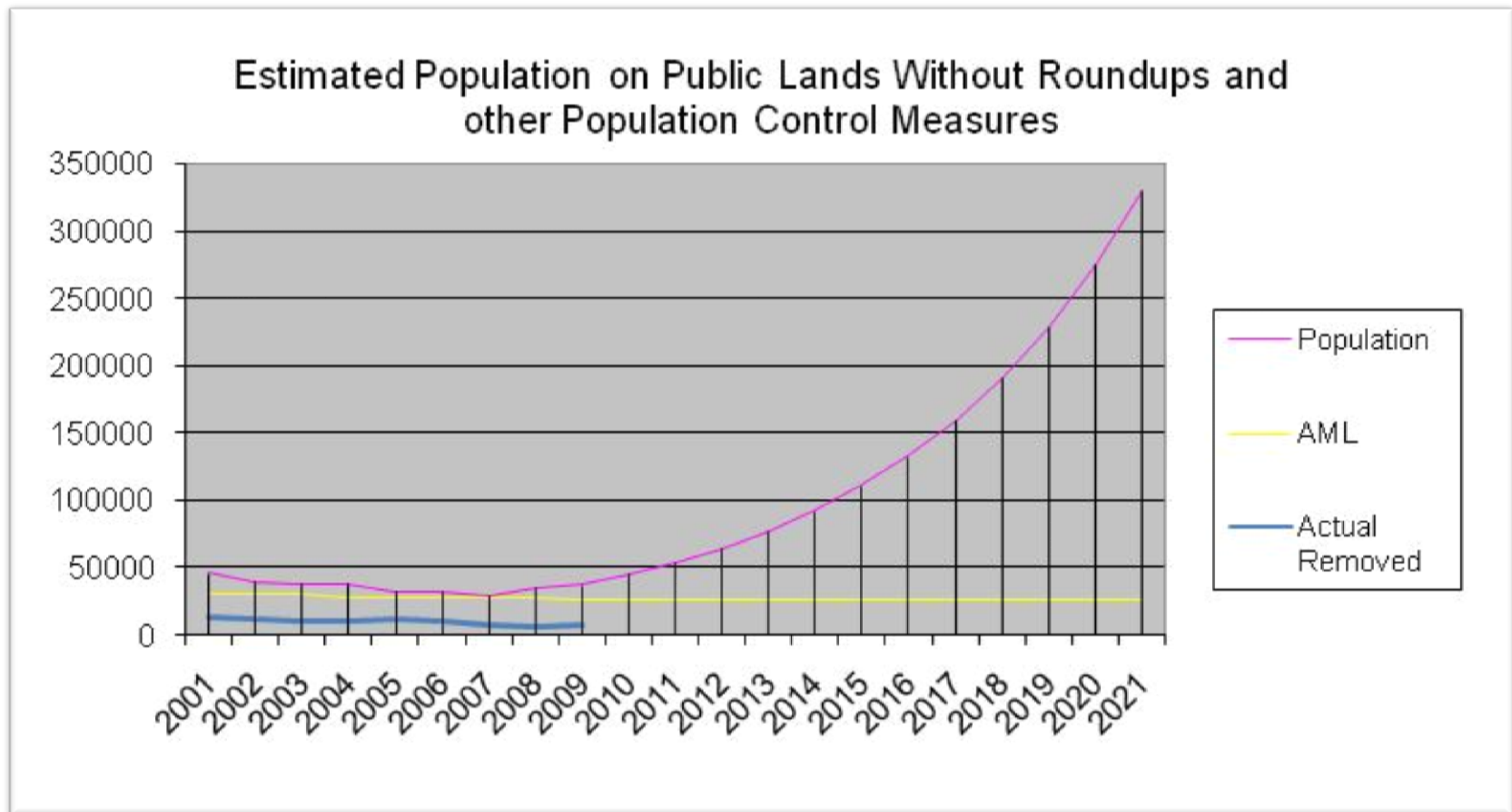


Fiscal Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Animals Adopted	6202	7630	7746	6165	6644	5701	5172	4772	3706	3496	3074
Animals Removed	8631	13277	12029	10081	9899	11023	9926	7726	5275	6036	10255

HOLDING COSTS VS. TOTAL BUDGET



Population Growth W/O Gathers and Population Control



GAO Report – 2008

FINDINGS

- Significant progress made towards achieving AML
- Spiraling off range holding costs not sustainable

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Implement improved population survey methods
- Develop cost effective alternatives for caring for unwanted horses
- Improve transparency and provide better information to public
- Limited options for dealing with unadoptable animals:
Discuss with Congress how best to comply with the WHB Act or amend it so BLM can be in compliance

OLG Report - 2010

Findings:

- Gathers are justified
- BLM's care and handling is humane
- Unchecked horse populations and rising holding costs are not sustainable

Recommendations

- Focus on research and testing of improved population growth control to balance adoption demand with removals and reduce numbers removed
- Over the long term reduce need for LTH and STH facilities
- Confirm the best science and needed new research through a NAS study

FY 2010 Appropriations Act

- Directed BLM to prepare a comprehensive, long-term plan and policy for wild horse and burro management.
- Consider private proposals for long-term care of wild horses and burros
- Create a bidding process among such proposals

New Management Strategy Development Process

- Secretary's Initiative (2009)
- BLM Teams
- Draft Strategy (June, 2010)
 - 9,000 public comments
- Revised Draft Strategy (Feb., 2011)
 - 43,000 public comments
- WHB Advisory Board Comments (June, 2011)
- Final Draft Strategy – Soon to be delivered to Congress
 - Next 3 years of management
 - Implementation started

Preview - Seven Elements of Reform

Predicated on a Flat \$75M Budget

1. Sustainable Herds/Population Growth Suppression
2. Science and Research
3. Partnership WHB Sanctuaries
4. Animal Welfare Program
5. Increase Adoptions
6. Program Transparency/Public Outreach
7. Ecotourism

1. Sustainable Herds

- Reduce removals from 10,000/ yr to 7,600 next 3 yrs.
 - Maintain existing on-the-range number (38,500)
 - Achieve AML in highest priority areas
 - Monitor, evaluate and adjust AMLs
 - Expand passive capture methods (bait and water trapping)
 - Implement improved census methods
- Increase Population Growth Suppression: treat 2000 head/yr. (increase from 500/yr)
 - Fertility Control (PZP), geldings, sex ratio adjustment to favor males
 - Consider incorporating non-reproductive herd components among reproductive horses and non-reproductive herds in some areas.
- Long Term Goal
 - Balance Removals with Adoptions
 - Achieve AML

2. Science and Research

- Use best science available
- Continue existing research on population growth suppression agents
- Explore new research for population growth suppression methods
- National Academy of Sciences Study
 - Initiated 2011; complete in 2013
 - Review existing pertinent science
 - Recommend needed new research

National Academy of Sciences Study

- Answer questions related to:
 - Population estimation
 - Genetic diversity
 - Population growth rates
 - Predator impact on population growth rates
 - Best methods for population growth suppression: fertility control for males/females, sex ratio adjustment, castration, spaying and vasectomies
 - Current methods for establishing/adjusting AMLs
 - Bridging societal differences about WHB management

3. Pastures and Partnerships: ecosanctuaries and other opportunities

- Goal: Reduce LTH cost and number of WHBs in LTH
 - Seek Partnership Ecosanctuaries :
 - Reduce cost, public viewing, adoption & horse training
 - Maintain or add to existing LTH capacity as long as needed
 - Farm Service Agency pasture programs

4. Comprehensive Animal Welfare Program

1. Develop a Comprehensive Animal Welfare Assessment tool and performance based standard operating procedures.
2. Internal Audits
3. External Audits

5. Place Animals in Private Care – Increase Adoptions

- Increase adoptions from 3,000 to over 4,000
- Expand partnerships such as Mustang Heritage Foundation (increase from 1,000 to 2,000 adopted in 2012)
- Offer more trained animals
- Expand government use of wild horses
- More University or Prison Training Programs
- More Youth Education programs (girl scouts, 4-H & FFA)

6. Public Outreach (Transparency)

- Build public trust through improved transparency, communication and openness
- Improve website for immediate access to current program information
 - Post real time data for gathers, adoptions and holding
- Enhance and maximize public viewing at gathers and holding facilities
- Annual public tours at LTH along with periodic media tours

7. Ecotourism & Volunteerism

- Ecotourism – Promotion of WHB Herds
 - Local community involvement
 - Partnerships with groups and communities
- Local volunteers and support groups
 - Range monitoring data collection
 - Water development and maintenance
 - Fertility control
 - Ground census

QUESTIONS???

